

Table Of Contents

- 1. [Ha-i-kyuu!!](#)
- 2. [The captains' meeting](#)
- 3. [The "lousy one" and the "rookie"](#)
- 4. [The best buddy's feelings](#)
- 5. [\[Translation\] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER \(1\)](#)
- 6. [\[Translation\] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER \(2\)](#)
- 7. [\[Translation\] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER \(3\)](#)
- 8. [\[Translation\] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER \(3\)](#)

Ha-i-kyuu!!

| *Haikyuu!! Novel 3 / covers & extras*

The captains' meeting

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Finally a new chapter!

This is the most requested chapter from you readers. Thank you for submitting your requests ^^ Because I just restarted my blog, my posts are not showing up on the tag page, hence this might not reach the people who actually requested for this chapter. If possible, can I ask of everyone who came across this to please help me reblog it? Thanks!

Shinzen High School stood quietly amidst the night forest.

Under the bright sun in the day, the forest was a luscious green, yet dark and quiet once it was night. The school felt as if it was hiding behind shadows, with only the classrooms where the participants of the training camp were in still lit. There was no way to change the intensity of the light from the fluorescent lamps, its brightness glaring when seen from outside the building.

One of the lit rooms was the room where the captains and vice captains of each team would gather. There was a blackboard with a timetable pasted on it—nothing different from a usual classroom. The tall guys who were all wearing t-shirt and shorts gathered around in the classroom. There were 10 of them.

This was the third night of the training camp and also the mid of the whole training camp, and everyone had gathered for a meeting. Although it was a meeting, it wasn't a serious one, with the tables arranged casually as the captains and vice captains discussed various issues.

Akaashi, the second-year vice captain of Fukurodani's volleyball and the host of today's meeting, read from his notebook in a muted voice, his head lowered.

"..... And so, taking into consideration everyone's body conditions, from tomorrow onwards, the penalty will be changed to a round of flying receives around the court. Everyone must take care to stay hydrated, and never push yourselves too hard..... my speech ends here."

“Eh, speak louder.”

Akaashi glared at the person commenting beside him, as if watching a show. That person was his senpai—Bokuto.

“This was supposed to be the job of the captain.”

“Hmm? Ah, is that so? Right, have the guys from Miyagi gotten used to the hot weather here?”

His kouhai’s complaints fell to deaf ears like usual. He turned around and asked the representatives from Karasuno—Sawamura and Sugawara. “The guys from Miyagi” referred to the members from Karasuno High School, while “here” refers to Saitama prefecture. The ignored Akaashi seemed to have long gotten used to Bokuto’s attitude. He closed his notebook.

Seeing the interaction between the two of them, Sawamura smiled slightly. Then, as though he’d remembered the hot weather, Sawamura fanned himself by pulling on his collar.

“The temperature in Miyagi goes beyond 30 degrees Celsius often too, but it’s not as hot compared to here. Honestly speaking, the humidity here is really unbearable.”

Sugawara, who was sitting beside him, nodded in agreement.

“How should I put it, the air here really has its presence.”

The air in Miyagi is relatively dry, so most people wouldn’t feel its existence. But here the humidity level is high, making people feel more hot and stuffy. The people from the Kanto region laughed at Sugawara’s interesting way of saying things.

Kuroo from Nekoma looked towards the open window, then took a glance at the night forest surrounding the school.

“But speaking of which, it’s already considered cooling here at Shinzen.”

“Because there’s the hill behind.”

Nekoma’s vice captain Kai smiled as he said. The wind blowing down from the hill rattled the leaves on the trees, then blew into the window. Facing the wind, the captain from Shinzen raised his chest, as if ready for a fight.

“Because there’s the hill, that’s why we have to run.”

Probably not just during the training camp, the members of Shinzen have to climb up the hills even on normal days during club training. Everyone looked at the two people from Shinzen pitifully. Then, the captain from Ubugawa glared at Bokuto with provocative eyes as he announced:

“We’ll aim to go for zero penalties tomorrow! We can’t have Fukurodani hoarding the spotlight.”

“Hahahahahahah! You’ve got backbone! Give it your all then!”

Bokuto stood up confidently, his hands on his hips. The representatives from Karasuno looked up at him, then looked at each other, their expression heavy.

“Suga, we must not lose every match tomorrow.....”

“Yeah, this is too frustrating.....”

—

Meeting adjourned. The representatives told each other “you’ve worked hard” and stood up. They already had their dinner, and had already taken their baths, all that’s left is to sleep and hence they were in no hurry at all. Some of them even started chatting.

“Oh! We have to win tomorrow!”

Ubugawa’s captain was still harping on it, his teeth clenched. Bokuto smiled and waved.

“Oh, Tarako and Broccoli! Please win tomorrow, it’s getting bored for us to keep winning!”

“Saying it in such relaxed tone!”

Ubugawa’s captain retaliated, refusing to admit defeat. Soon after, the representatives from Ubugawa and Shinzen left the classroom, their footsteps sounded across the quiet corridor. With half of the people left, the classroom became more spacious.

“Then, let’s head back too.”

Sawamura rearranged the tables as he spoke to Sugawara. Just then, Bokuto’s

voice sounded across the classroom.

“Ah, oh no! We’re done!”

Akaashi took a glance at his senpai, obviously irritated, but he still asked reluctantly.

“What is it?”

“Damn it! I had brought poker cards along, but forgot to take them out just now! I was still looking forward to seeing Tarako’s face of defeat! Damn it!”

Bokuto took out the poker cards from his pocket, screaming while holding them in his hands. Akaashi mumbled while looking at him:

“Despite dissing each other, I guess the relationship between the two of you is still good.”

“That’s true.”

Bokuto answered. He stuck his tongue out, then returned to his usual look while looking at the five remaining people in the classroom.

“Alright! Then the remaining people shall play!”

Seeing Bokuto make the decision by himself, Akaashi bowed apologetically towards the others from Nekoma and Karasuno.

“..... Please do not mind, you guys can leave as well.”

Please, Akaashi waved his hand, hurrying others to leave the classroom. However, Kuroo ignored his actions, instead standing in front of Bokuto. He smiled provocatively, then challenged him:

“Oh, so you think you can win me in the battle of the minds?”

“He didn’t say he was going to engage anyone in psychological warfare, though.”

Vice captain Kai corrected Kuroo, his face smiling. Akaashi was slightly taken aback when he realised Kuroo’s unexpected interest, but seeing his expression, Akaashi decided to give up talking Kuroo out of it. Akaashi hung his head low.

“Hehe..... speaking of the battle of the minds, our captain will not lose too!”

The person who walked towards Bokuto with a smile on his face was Sugawara. “Ah, me? Why?” Sawamura was slightly taken aback by Sugawara’s sudden mention. Kuroo laughed at Sawamura’s shocked expression.

“You guys from Karasuno, whatever you’re thinking is already written on your faces, there’s no way you guys can hide it. Winning against you guys must be easy.”

Hearing Kuroo’s words. Sawamura’s gaze deepened.

“..... You said it! Since you’ve put it this way, there’s no way I won’t play.”

Unconsciously, all four of them showed a will to fight. Bokuto looked at the four of them and raised his poker cards, clearly satisfied.

“Alright, it’s been decided, then!”

“Let’s play ‘old maid’ then.”

“Let’s arrange the tables together.”

The five of them looked as if they were on a night during a school excursion. They arranged the tables in the middle of the classroom swiftly. Seeing the happy third years, Akaashi reminded them.

“Then..... just one round.”

A full moon shone from outside the windows, the grasses swaying in the wind, the insects calling.

—

The six of them sat facing each other, with Kuroo shuffling the deck. Seeing his swift movement, Bokuto exclaimed:

“You look like a conman!”

Bokuto said, impressed, his eyes wide. Kuroo raised an eyebrow while Akaashi asked irritably:

“You mean to say a magician.”

“Yeah, that’s what I meant! Alright, here goes!”

Once Bokuto said, everyone else took the cards in front of them. After

confirming their deck, they picked out the same cards and threw it out. Everyone had a different reaction.

“Oh, not bad not bad, my deck’s not bad at all.”

“Why does the King of Hearts have no mustache?”

“Hey, what cards are these? Can I beat up the dealer?”

“.....”

“Suga, how’s your cards?”

“Hmm, fine I guess.”

After everyone had thrown out the cards, Bokuto raised his fist.

“Alright, here we go! Scissors, paper, stone.....!”

Everyone shouted while revealing their hands, and after a few rounds of draws, Akaashi, the winner, started drawing a card from Bokuto, who was beside him.

Bokuto raised his voice, shouting “Alright, draw it!”, but once Akaashi saw his cards, he sighed.

“..... You’re making it difficult for me to draw.”

Bokuto had five cards in his hand, with the card in the middle slightly higher than the others, as if forcing Akaashi to draw it.

“Hey, Akaashi, which card will you choose? Hmm?”

“Are you a kid?”

Akaashi ignored the card in the middle, deciding to choose the one by the side, but he couldn’t remove it from Bokuto’s hands.

“That’s weird?”

Akaashi glanced at Bokuto and realised that he was very serious, desperately holding on to all the cards except the one in the middle with his fingers, refusing to let Akaashi take away the other cards. “Woah, troublesome.” Although that was what Akaashi thought, because the opponent was his senpai, he could only give up, and anyway they’ll only be playing for a round— might as well let the game end sooner.

“..... Okay okay okay, I get it.”

Akaashi whined while drawing away the middle card. Of course, it was the Joker.

“Wahahahahahahaha, someone took the Joker on his first try!”

Akaashi ignored the overly-excited Bokuto, he placed his cards in front of Kai, then said:

“We’ll go in this direction, okay?”

“Hmm, is it my turn?”

Kai took a card from Akaashi. He exclaimed softly, nodded, then placed his cards in front of Kuroo beside him.

“Ah?”

Akaashi was surprised seeing Kai’s attitude.

“What?”

Bokuto was curious, but Akaashi shook his head and said: “Ah, no, nothing.”

Akaashi didn’t know whether to say it, hence chose to keep silent instead. Kai had drawn the Joker—Akaashi shuddered.

I had always thought he was an honest guy, to think he’s this cunning.....

Kai didn’t notice Akaashi’s shudder, instead keeping a poker face while placing the cards in front of Kuroo. Kuroo, who had been observing Kai, smiled lightly:

“Kai, you picked the Joker, didn’t you.”

“Hmm? Ah, you know your game.”

“Yeah.”

Kai admitted truthfully. Kuroo didn’t think too much, drawing the card from the side casually, then mumbled “Ah, there we have it”, and threw out the same cards from his deck.

Which means to say, the Joker is still with Kai.

Following that, Kuroo placed his remaining four cards in front of Sawamura. Unsure what he was thinking about, Sawamura kept staring at Kuroo’s cards, then started asking Kuroo.

“Did Kai really pick the Joker just now?”

“Huh?”

“You’re just riling up Kai, right?”

“..... You know your game well.”

Seeing Kuroo slightly shaken, Sawamura continued:

“Yeah, because you said you were good at playing mind games, so I kept observing you, curious on how you would react.”

“I see, then you’re good enough to be my opponent.”

“Hehe.....”

“Hehehe.....”

Tension rose between the two of them. The other representative stared at them, speechless.

“How is it? Our captain is scary too, right.”

Sugawara smiled proudly. Then, Kai raised his hand quietly, the Joker card in his hand.

“I really drew it, look.”

Kai hid the Joker card back into his desk immediately after saying. The others were all shocked by his actions and gulped, then responded with “Oh, um”, “Really”.

Kuroo smiled while saying: “I really don’t want to be enemies with Kai.....”, while Akaashi knitted his eyebrows.

“..... This is really a troublesome game.”

—

Sawamura drew a card from Kuroo’s deck without the Joker, but he couldn’t match any of his cards. Sugawara was next, and because the Joker was with Kai, there was no need for worry.

“This game is becoming quite something.....”

Sugawara said as he drew a card from Sawamura.

“Ah, lucky.” The card he drew matched with one of his original cards, Sugawara then placed the pair in the middle of the table. Bokuto was next.

“Which~One~Should~I~Draw?” He drew a card excitedly from Sugawara, but exclaimed: “Ah! I’m done!”. Although the reaction was huge, it wasn’t anything much, just him unable to draw a pair. Bokuto placed his card in front of Akaashi.

“Your turn!”

“Do I have to draw from Bokuto-san all the time.....”

“You have something to say?”

“..... Not really, since I get equally irritated no matter who I draw from.”

Although the mood wasn’t as harmonious and happy as it should be, the nerve-wrecking game continued on. A single Joker card could reveal the personality of that person when it lands on his hands.

The Joker card continued getting passed around among the high school boys, and after a few rounds, the observant Kai finally won.

Only Akaashi and Sugawara were left. Under the stares of those who already won, Akaashi placed his two cards in front of Sugawara. Sugawara was troubling over which card to pick.

“Um..... I pick this!”

Sugawara looked at his card after finishing what he said, then exclaimed “Great!” as he threw the paired cards out.

“.....”

Akaashi threw the remaining Joker from his hand, then quietly collected the cards from the table.

“Then, let’s.....”

End the game here. Just as Akaashi was going to say that, Bokuto laughed.

“Ah, great! Thank god I’m not last! If I’m the weakest, I’ll be too embarrassed to even walk out from this room!”

“.....”

Akaashi stacked the cards neatly, then spoke softly while looking down:

“..... Alright, let’s have another round.”

The night breeze blew in from the windows, the curtains swaying while the fluorescent lamp on the ceiling flickered.

—

The six of them sat facing each other once again, with Kuroo shuffling and dealing the cards like a professional dealer in the casino. The second round began.

Everyone had a face of seriousness while looking at their decks, no one knew who got the Joker.

But once they started throwing out the paired cards, something weird occurred.

“Oh, I think I’ll win!”

Bokuto said excitedly. It wasn’t difficult to comprehend, given that many of his cards were paired, with only two cards left in his hands.

“Hey, did you shuffle them properly?”

Sawamura glanced towards Kuroo. The others all had about seven or eight cards, with only Bokuto having the least. Kai spoke to Bokuto:

“This guy gets lucky at times like this.”

“Luck is a skill, too!”

Bokuto smiled, his chest puffed up. Everyone then did scissors-paper-stone, and surprisingly, the lucky Bokuto won.

“Great! My time has come!”

Finishing what he said, Bokuto drew a card from Sugawara, and after matching a pair, he threw two cards out.

“Oh! I’m left with only one!”

Bokuto was all hyped up, but once he placed his card in front of Akaashi, his mood turned south again.

“Eh.....? Once Akaashi draws this card from me, I’m all done?”

“Congratulations on being first.”

Akaashi said expressionlessly as he drew the last card from Bokuto. Bokuto screamed.

“..... What! There’s no Joker! What kind of game is this! I wanted to play with more suspense and excitement! I could score 24 points just by serving alone, it’s nothing special!”

Seeing Bokuto throwing a tantrum due to winning too early, the people from Karasuno and Nekoma all stared at him while speechless. Probably used to Bokuto’s erratic change in his mood ever so often, Akaashi bowed towards the others in apology: “I’m terribly sorry, this person from my team is a bit weird.....”

Just then, the upset Bokuto stood up from his seat.

“Alright, then the King will make his order, the loser will help massage the King! Everyone should feel honoured!”

Probably satisfied with his idea, Bokuto’s mood became good again. The others of course objected to his suggestion.

“W-Wait a minute, when did this become the King’s game?”

“The winner takes all.”

“This is tyranny.”

“It’s all because I didn’t shuffle the cards well enough.....”

Bokuto would hear nothing from the losers. He left his seat and sat on the cold floor with his legs stretched, then took the monthly volleyball magazine from a table nearby and started flipping through it.

The others glared at Bokuto’s back, while Bokuto started humming a tune, clearly satisfied. Akaashi, the loser from the first round and also the one with the most cards now, mumbled to himself, his eyes serious.

“I must not lose in this round.....”

The game resumed. Kai drew from Akaashi, Kuroo drew from Kai, both of them did not manage to draw a pair from their decks. Under the fluorescent lamp’s

glaring light, everyone maintained their silence, their expressions unchanged.

Surrounded by an air of nervousness, Sawamura stretched out his hands to draw from Kuroo's deck. He managed a stiff smile, as if trying to change the atmosphere.

"..... Hmm, most people wouldn't place the joker at the sides."

After saying, Sawamura touched the card on the furthest right. Kuroo raised the corner of his mouth.

"Oh, is that card really fine?"

"W-What did you say?"

"Ah, fine by me if you insist on that card."

"This guy.....!"

Kuroo's words shook Sawamura's determination.

Is this really the Joker? But if it really is, why would Kuroo say that? He could've just kept his silence and let me take the card?

But if it's really not the joker, then all the more I wouldn't understand why Kuroo said what he said. Did he mean to say the Joker is among these five cards? But Kuroo wouldn't know if I will draw the Joker from the five cards, could that guy be that confident in making me draw the Joker?

No, wait, probably that guy knows that I have with me 3, 5, 6, 10 and K, that's why he didn't want me to draw their pairs. No, that's impossible.....

Sawamura became enveloped in suspicion, his mind thinking over and over again, his forehead sweating, his eyes even becoming bloodshot. Kuroo seemed to have noticed Sawamura's uncertainty and smirked. Sawamura noticed Kuroo smiling, then reminded Sugawara, completely surprised.

"That guy, can probably read minds!"

"Daichi..... How is that possible."

"Eh, ah, um, that's true. Sorry, I must be crazy."

Sawamura nearly fell into darkness, only returning to his senses upon hearing what Sugawara said. He then drew the card he had wanted to draw without

looking at Kuroo's face. His expression changed.

"What....."

"Yay! You've been fooled!"

Kuroo laughed happily while pointing at Sawamura. That's right, Sawamura had drawn the Joker. His body trembling in embarrassment.

"Y-You..... however, the game has just begun! Here, Suga."

"Eh? Ah, hmm, uh, I choose this."

Sugawara's expression changed too.

Then, he tried very hard to pretend nothing was wrong while shuffling his cards. Sawamura, who had returned to normal, noticed Sugawara's unnatural action. Sawamura whispered into his ears:

"Suga, whenever you pick the Joker, your eyebrows will twitch, be careful of that."

"Ah? My eyebrows?"

Sugawara rubbed onto his own eyebrows, Akaashi then asked:

"Um, is it my turn to draw already?"

"Ah ah, yeah, sorry! Please draw, draw as much as you can! Might as well draw two or three at once!"

"No....."

Sugawara placed his cards in front of Akaashi. When Akaashi touched onto one of the cards, Sugawara said nothing except smirk slyly. Akaashi noticed his smile and retracted his hand immediately.

"..... What was that smile supposed to mean?"

"Eh? Why? Didn't I say draw as you please? Just draw it."

"Ah, um....."

Seeing Akaashi pick on another card, Sugawara smiled slyly again.

Akaashi knitted his eyebrows:

“..... Sugawara-san is such an actor.”

“Because I can’t afford to lose!”

“Then I’ll close my eyes, it’s fine.”

“Ah, despicable!”

“What do you mean by ‘despicable’.....”

Akaashi closed his eyes and picked a card. When he opened his eyes again, he felt the world spinning, his view distorted.

“W-Why.....”

“The Joker..... no matter what you do, you still picked the Joker!”

Probably bored from reading the magazine, Bokuto ran behind Akaashi and said what was on Akaashi’s mind. The others, upon finding out that the Joker had moved to another player’s hands, could not help but fidget a little.

Akaashi zoned out for a while, then bowed towards Kai.

He then placed his cards swiftly in front of Kai, and, similar to Bokuto from earlier on, the middle card was placed higher than the other cards.

“Please, I definitely can’t lose, can you please pick this card?”

“T-To think you’d resort to such tricks.”

The usually calm Kai was all embarrassed all of a sudden. Kuroo smiled.

“Interesting! This is too interesting!”

“..... Say what you want.”

Seeing Akaashi’s serious expression, Kai hesitated, but still picked the card in the middle.

—

“Oh, so comfortable! This is too great..... Ah, a bit more to the right!”

Bokuto laid on the floor lethargically while Kai massaged his waist.

Seeing how Akaashi wanted to win so much without caring for his reputation, Kai softened in that instant and drew the Joker, becoming the loser.

No one would have the heart to reject someone who, with pleading eyes and serious expression, begged to have the Joker taken away. Although the weak would not survive, a heartless person would not even have the right to carry on living.

Kai, who was massaging Bokuto, had no looks of regret. He massaged skillfully while asking Bokuto softly.

“This part seems a little stiff, what about here?”

Kai increased the pressure on his fingertips as he said.

“Ah? Ooh, painful painful painful! S-Stop it, o-ouchhhhhhhhhh!”

Kai looked down at Bokuto, who was struggling from the sudden pain. He mumbled with a straight face.

“Oh oh, you’re in pain over there? What about the other areas? I should try to.....”

Kai looked up at the other four and smiled as he said. The other four looked at the both of them, slightly afraid.

“..... Eh, should we have another round?”

Although Kai’s tone and expression looked calm, his eyes emitted a dark ray. Those were the eyes of a predator looking for its next prey.

Sugawara looked at the groaning Bokuto on the floor, then squeezed out a smile.

“I’m leaving first. I’m worried my kouhais are making too much noise, Daichi, you?”

Sugawara had wanted to help Sawamura, but little did he imagine Sawamura had become all serious as he raised his head.

“No, I’m staying, I can’t leave this room a loser.”

“Oh, then let’s have another round!

“Them..... don’t push yourself too hard.”

Sugawara left the classroom worriedly. The remaining five gathered at the table once again. The third round began—

Draw the card, let others draw your card..... A dangerous aura formed among the five of them. Once Sugawara left, the tension in the classroom increased. “This is just a game”—such casual attitude was long gone.

“Ah, let’s switch places! Akaashi doesn’t have the card I want, so infuriating!”

“..... What are you saying.”

Who will be the winner and loser of the third round?

The guys have long forgotten about the punishment, instead all focusing on deceiving the person in front of them. The fourth round, the fifth round..... the game continued.

Unsure how many rounds has it been, after Sawamura drew his last card, Kai stood up and said:

“..... Alright, although it’s slightly embarrassing to leave immediately after winning, that’s all for me. I have to wake up early tomorrow.”

“Oh, um, is that so?”

“See you guys tomorrow.....”

Speaking of the matches, we will not lose!”

The captains, not even trying to hide their frustration, watched as Kai left the classroom. Akaashi had already fallen asleep with his face down on the table.

—

“..... Ooh ooh.”

Hinata had woken up from wanting to pee. He opened his eyes—he was in the classroom used by the Karasuno members for sleeping. The classroom was pitch-dark, the sky outside dark too. What time is it now? He stood up, put on his bedroom slippers and made sure not to step on the other members, then walked onto the corridor. He never would’ve dreamt that the captain and vice captain had yet to return.

“Hmm, toilet toilet.”

Hinata rubbed onto his tired eyes, his footsteps hurried as he walked onto the dark corridor. He listened to his footsteps as he walked, but felt as though he

heard someone talking in a low voice and hence stopped in his tracks.

“Hmm?”

What was that sound? Hinata raised his ears.

Yah!

“Eh? A scream?”

Hinata was all awake suddenly.

“..... Is any of the schools having a bravery contest?”

He forgot about going to the toilet, instead walking towards where the sound came from.

Hinata stood in front of the classroom where the sound came from, then heard Sawamura’s voice from inside. Just then Hinata finally remembered, the captains did have a classroom for them to hold meetings.

“What time is it now? Are they still busy.....?”

Hinata, concerned by the murmurs from within the classroom, opened the door slowly.

“Uh, sorry to bother.”

Once he opened the door, a wave of heat hit Hinata. Despite only separated by a door, the classroom had an air totally different from the corridor, and this took Hinata by shock. He worked up his courage and peeked into the classroom.

“That.....”

In the classroom were three guys facing each other while seated. These people should be the captains, but their conditions slightly weird. There was someone sleeping on the floor.

“Damn it, I got cheated again.....”

“Wasn’t my intention.”

“..... I’ll definitely win in the next round.”

“Alright, let’s bet on Akaashi’s soul!”

“To think you’d betray the sleeping guy like this.....”

It sounded like a conversation between enemies, their words threatening. Are the captains quarreling? Hinata was worried and hence spoke, albeit scared.

“Uh, it’s senpai…… right?”

Hearing Hinata’s voice, the three captains placed their hands above the poker cards swiftly to hide them, then turned their heads.

“W-Who is it!”

Just then a gust of wind blew from the window, the curtain lifted by the wind. The fluorescent lamp on the ceiling flickered, and under the light, the three guys stared at Hinata with bloodshot eyes.

“Eh?……. U-Uwah! Ghosts, there’re ghosts!”

Hinata jumped and ran away immediately, the door still ajar. His footsteps diminished along the corridor until it couldn’t be heard anymore.

The captains looked at each other, then turned their heads in embarrassment.

“Hinata, that guy…… said there’re ghosts?”

“I think it’s time to sleep…….”

“Now that you mentioned it, I am starting to feel tired. Hey, Akaashi, get up!”

“…… Hmm?”

After the meeting the rounds and rounds of mind games, the four of them walked out from the classroom. Other than Akaashi, who was woken up from his sleep, the others were all awake after snapping out of their possessed state. Everyone returned to their respective classrooms and went back to their futons quietly.

Now, even the last lamp in the school had been turned off. The school was all dark, as if hiding behind the forest.

The luscious green forest, along with the high school students who sweated under the hot sun in the day in summer, all became quiet at night.

Hinata hid under his blanket, his face pale from running away, his body trembling due to fear and his need to pee.

“I-I can’t go to the toilet anymore…….”

-end-

The “lousy one” and the “rookie”

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“Time for ricey! Time for ricey!”

The delicious smell of breakfast infiltrated the corridor as Hinata passed by energetically. There were no traces of tiredness from traveling, fatigue from practices or reluctance to getting out of bed from his body. Probably because he was looking forward to the breakfast so much, Hinata was all smiles. Just then, someone called him from behind.

“Hinata, why are you still holding on to the ball before breakfast?”

“Eh?”

Hinata turned back and saw the person who spoke. He raised his hand.

“Ah, Lev, Kenma, morning.”

The person who spoke before greeting Hinata was someone 190cm in height, with green eyes and who would leave a deep impression—Haiba Lev, a first year student from Nekoma High School. The person with a pudding head beside him was Kozume Kenma, a second year student. Kozume was still bleary-eyed. He rubbed his eyes.

“You’re asking about this?”

Hinata spun the ball with his hands while answering.

“Because I’ m still lousy, so I have to make myself more accustomed with the ball. I have been asked to hold on to the ball the whole day.”

“Do you become better just by holding it?”

Lev asked curiously, while Kozume looked up at him and said:

“You try it too.”

Although the first year member Lev was tall, he only started volleyball in high school. But even so, owing to his height and his good ball sense, he had already

become one of Nekoma's regular players. He is competing with fellow first year member Inuoka for the position of a middle blocker. Speaking of which, although he is a Japanese-Russian, it seemed that he could only speak Japanese.

Lev's well-defined face had become twisted.

"I don't want to, isn't it inconvenient to hold onto the ball all the time?"

"You're but a rookie, what's with that pride of yours."

Seeing Kozume mumbling to himself, Hinata found it interesting and smiled.

"Kenma became more like a senpai with Lev around!"

"Eh?"

Kozume hadn't acted like a senpai purposefully, he hadn't forced Lev to carry the ball around too, but seeing the way he talked with his members, Hinata still found it fresh. When the two of them send messages to each other on usual days, Kozume would usually only reply with words like "still okay" or "barely okay". The usually disinterested Kozume is now giving his kouhai suggestions.

"I'm not."

Kozume looked slightly irritated, Hinata laughed lightly before adding on to what he said just now, as if he'd just thought of it.

"Ah, right, Kenma, let's practice tossing and spiking together after breakfast!"

"I don't want to."

Kozume replied almost instantly.

"Ah, just once will do!"

".....Troublesome."

Lev interrupted from behind.

"Speaking of which, just once is meaningless."

"I mean—'just once' meaning we start from the first ball!"

Hinata turned around and answered.

"What, Hinata actually lied!"

“That’s not it!”

The three of them looked at each other, two looking up and one looking down. Hinata, whose short stature doesn’t make him look like a volleyball player, and Lev, whose tall stature doesn’t make him look like a first year student. They continued walking along the corridor noisily, while Kozume, walking in between them, kept his irritated face as he mumbled.

“So noisy, the both of you.....”

Just like this, Hinata, Kozume and Lev opened the door to the canteen infiltrated by the morning sun, its air filled with delicious smell of happiness.

“Time for ricey!”

“Time to eat time to eat!”

“..... I want to sleep.”

—

A total of five schools participated in the weekend training camp in July, and they have all gathered once again for the summer training camp, and schools from the Kanto region included the main school of the academy group Fukurodani High School, Nekoma High School, both of which are from Tokyo; Shinzen High School, the venue of the training camp, from Saitama prefecture; and Ubugawa High School from the Shinagawa prefecture. Lastly, Karasuno High School from the Miyagi prefecture.

The volleyball players from these five schools started their warm up exercises in the warm and stuffy first gymnasium. Even though it was still morning, the weather was very hot. The weather in the afternoon would mostly be worst.

Outside the court, the club manager Shimizu was giving suggestions to the new first year manager Yachi, who joined not long ago: “Don’t just focus on making the drinks for the members, remember to hydrate yourself too, don’t push yourself too hard.”

Hinata did the warm up exercises before the practice while looking at his surrounding. This was his second expedition this summer, but he still could not hide his excitement. No matter the players doing jumps or practicing with the balls, everyone looked stronger than him. That goes without saying, since as a

matter-of-fact, Karasuno High School is the weakest among the schools. This was apparent since their previous training camp over the weekend in July.

But this also meant that Hinata would have the chance to learn from everyone around him, picking up new skills along the way. Karasuno High School is currently trying to figure out new ways of attacking, and there was no way to waste any moment here in the training camp. Thinking about this, Hinata's body trembled with excitement.

"Alright, let's go!"

Hinata, full of energy, started stretching his ankle. Sugawara called upon him.

"Hinata, it's good to have a lot of energy, but if you waste all of them just doing warm up, there won't be any point to it."

"Yes!"

The design for the training camp remains unchanged, with the five schools doing rotating matches. Two matches will take place concurrently on the two courts available, while the remaining school will take the roles of umpire, sub-umpire, score tabulator and so on. The losing teams will be liable for strict penalties, and even if they don't want to, the whole weekend will be purely on practicing and playing volleyball every day. Other than these, the members can also do their own practices in their own free time.

Karasuno High School was up first to take on the supporting roles during the matches. The captain Sawamura gathered his members and told them:

"Then, Hinata and Yamaguchi will wipe the court over there."

"Osu! I will 'steal' while I wipe!"

Hinata was all serious, his words not quite making sense. Yamaguchi tensed up upon hearing it.

"Ah? What are we stealing?"

Sawamura was slightly taken aback before managing a bitter smile:

"Right, then I'll 'steal' while doing my job as a line judge!"

"Huh? Even the captain?"

Yamaguchi held the wiping cloth in his hands, his face uncertain. Tanaka and Nishinoya shouted:

“Then, my goal is five of them!”

“10 for me!”

“Are you guys watermelon thieves..... they’re talking about ‘stealing’ skills.”

Ennoshita explained to the lost Yamaguchi.

“Eh? Ah, is that so! Scared me.....”

“Alright, then let’s head to the courts, let’s go!”

Hearing the captain’s voice, the members dispersed into their respective courts. The second day of the summer training camp had finally begun.

The five schools took turns during the practice matches, and among them Fukurodani High School was the strongest, with one of the top five players in the country Bokuto in the team. They have won every single match so far, avoiding the penalty completely. Ubugawa and Shinzen were teams with strong will and attacking skills; Nekoma maintained their stable defense; Karasuno remained in the slumps, the same as yesterday.

A whistle came after a ball went past the line, and that marked the end of the last match in the morning. Other than the members of Ubugawa who were going to do their penalty, the members from the other schools have begun their afternoon break. The members of Ubugawa stepped outside, while the members of Karasuno returned. Having lost three straight matches and performed three penalties, Hinata, with his forehead covered in sweat, saw Lev who was about to enter the canteen. Hinata ran up to him.

“Lev, let’s have a competition. The person to complete 30 serves first wins! The bet will be the Hamburg steak for lunch!”

“Hmm? Hamburg steak? Alright, call!”

Although Lev had just finished a match, he was completely drawn in by the Hamburg steak, hence agreeing to Hinata’s suggestion.

“C-Can I join too.....”

Hearing them talking about competing with serves, Yamaguchi looked at Hinata, slightly afraid.

“Of course! This way I’ll have two extra Hamburg steaks!”

Hinata was already drooling even before the match began. Then, Azumane picked up a ball and said: “Then, I’ll join too.” “I’ll become the King of Hamburg steak!” Tanaka joined too. “Me too! I want to hit it too!” Inuoka from Nekoma, who was picking up the balls, ran over when he heard the others.

Kageyama wiped his sweat as he looked at them, but he had no intention to join. Since the weekend training camp the other time, because Hinata said he wanted to open his eyes while performing quicks, their ideas clashed and since then, the both of them had not talked to each other.

Although Kageyama walked out from the gymnasium straight, he neither took a rest immediately, nor did he go to the canteen. The proof lies in the ball he’s still holding in his hands—turns out he’s going to practice the new toss by himself.

Noticing his members together with the others from Karasuno, Nekoma’s captain Kuroo stopped in his footsteps.

“What’s going on?”

Upon knowing the others were betting on doing serves, Kuroo smirked:

“Karasuno’s shrimp can still move? He’s still limitless as always. So how, Kenma? Do you want to join them?”

“.....”

Kenma did not answer as he headed towards the main door of the gymnasium. Kuroo smiled while grabbing him in his shoulders and said: “Let’s go take a look.” He then sat in a corner of the gymnasium with his legs stretched out. Kenma reluctantly sat beside him while holding his knees to his body.

The six people who have betted on their own hamburg steaks took their position on the line.

“Then, let’s begin!”

Hinata shouted energetically and starting serving, but the ball hit the net

before rolling back to the side of his legs.

“S-So embarrassing.....!”

Lev looked at the red-faced Hinata, he then shouted with vigor.

“Alright, I’ll do a jump floater!”

Then, Lev lifted a ball, and with a slight jump, he hit the ball out with his long, slender arms. However, the ball went straight past the net before hitting against the wall on the opposite side.

“Eh?”

“Hey, Lev! You can’t even do the basics, what the hell are you doing? Do your serves seriously!”

Kuroo laughed loudly while saying in a casual tone. Lev looked at Kuroo, his face all scrunched up.

“It’s so difficult.....”

Amidst the conversation between the two, the other members did the serves stably. Hinata and Lev picked up the next ball immediately.

“There should be no problem this time!”

“I won’t lose to you!”

The lousy one and the rookie, ignoring their height difference, glared at each other, then served the ball in their hands respectively.

Hinata’s serve landed on the line at the back.

“Yay!”

“Hah!”

Lev shouted as well, looking as though his serve was a success as well. But Kenma looked at them with an unbearable expression. He mumbled:

“The standard’s too low.”

The sound of balls bouncing off the floor, the shoe soles rubbing against the floor. At noon, in the first gymnasium with its door wide open, the six of them continued serving by themselves. The ones who have finished left the gymnasium one by one, not forgetting to cheer on the others.

After a while, after a series of powerful serves, Tanka screamed.

“Awesome! That makes it 30 successful serves! I’ll accept your hamburg steaks!”

“Eh? Already done with 30 serves?”

Hinata was taken aback, the ball on his hand fell to the floor.

“How many hamburg steaks for me? Six? I can have six? Yahoo!”

Seeing Tanaka, who appeared to have forgotten about his fatigue while skipping around, Kuroo smiled bitterly.

“That rough-looking bearded guy, and the skinny fellow, both of them were practicing their jump serves and jump floaters, but that buzz cut was just doing normal serves.”

Azumane protested immediately.

“Ah..... I’m in this competition too?”

“Me too! I did not place my bet!” Inuoka continued. Hearing what they said, Yamaguchi spoke up timidly.

“M-Me too.....”

“I-Is that so..... then, I’ll only get to eat Hinata and Lev’s. That makes it three for me!”

Tanaka dashed towards the canteen for his hamburg steaks.

“Alright, 30 serves!”

Inuoka left his position too, his fists clenched. Lev couldn’t hide his surprise and shouted: “Ah, I lost to Inuoka!” Seeing Lev’s expression, Kenma sighed.

“Inuoka would never lose to Lev in the first place.....”

Then, Azumane and Yamaguchi completed their 30 serves too, and all that was left was the lousy one and the rookie duo.

“I will not lose to you!”

“Who would want to be last!”

Seeing the two of them glaring at each other, as if vying for the last place,

Kenma stood up irritably.

“I knew it would turn out this way.”

Kuroo moved his neck as well. He then tagged behind Kenma.

“I’m hungry, let’s go.”

Only Hinata and Lev were left in the hot and stuffy gymnasium. The two of them continued serving repeatedly, but they still could not reach their goal.

“Damn it, hamburg steak!”

“It’s all because of you and your meaningless competition!”

—

“I’m so full, hehehehehe, to the right, to the left, so much fried chicken for the night ♪”

Hinata managed to make it to the canteen for lunch before it closed. Although he didn’t get to eat his hamburg steak, he ate a lot more rice than usual. Hinata hugged his bursting stomach while he walked on the corridor in a great mood.

He still held onto a ball with his hand, but probably because his fingers touched the ball while he was spinning it, the ball flew out from his palms.

“Ah, oh no.”

Hinata turned around, his eyes met with Kageyama, who was walking behind him.

“Ooh.”

Hinata suddenly tensed up, but seeing Kageyama catch the ball with one hand effortlessly, he couldn’t help but think—

“Ah.....”

Is it because his hands are too small, or is it purely out of habit? Hinata still could not hold the ball with one hand. The ball he’d used when he was in Junior High was a size 4, and when he entered High School, he started using a size 5. Although the diameter was only 1cm bigger, the ball felt a whole lot bigger to Hinata.

Kageyama threw the ball back at Hinata, slightly irritated. He then walked past Hinata quickly. Kageyama didn't turn back, instead back facing Hinata as he said.

"..... You'd better wash your hands clean."

"Huh?"

Hinata hugged onto the ball, his mouth wide open. He grasped immediately what Kageyama was implying, because he was just about to head into the washroom in front.

"..... Hmph, what a rude guy. Of course I'll wash my hand. Hmph, damn it."

Hinata whined while walking into the washroom. He then peeked out from the washroom again and placed the volleyball he'd taken into the washroom by accident on the corridor. Then, after confirming that Kageyama wasn't looking, he rushed into the washroom immediately.

—

There are matches in the afternoon as well. Once it was afternoon, the members of Karasuno High School had already ran up the hill behind the school twice. The penalty for the losing teams were dubbed "Shinzen's special! Refreshing sprint up the grassy hill."

The members must run up to the top of the steep and uneven hill and run all the way back. Compared to running on an even ground, this was way more tiring, making their legs tremble and unable to lift up.

The chirps of the cicadas from behind the gymnasium were stinging to the ears. When the fatigued members returned, they started gulping down the sports drinks given by their managers.

Tanaka finished his drink in one gulp; he wiped the corner of his mouth.

"..... Fwah, I'm alive again! Speaking of which, we're on an expedition in Tokyo, right. I had thought we'd be competing against the city boys in a concrete jungle setting. I didn't expect us to be forced to withstand the challenges posed by nature, I felt so cheated!"

Ennoshita mumbled while wiping away his sweat.

"No one lied, this is Saitama."

“Actually, I don’t quite get Saitama. Will there be cute mascots around?”

Nishinoya looked in the direction of the forests. Ennoshita answered him calmly.

“Wouldn’t it be very scary if there’re mascots in the forest.”

“Really? Those guys are weak in their legs, all we have to do is go under them!”

“Why’re you talking about strategies all of a sudden.....”

Ennoshita couldn’t be bothered with Nishinoya. Tanaka patted him on the back.

“Don’t worry, there’s nothing to be afraid of, Ennoshita. Seeing the body dimensions of these mascots, if you hide into a single cubicle in the toilet, I don’t think they’ll be able to get in.”

“They probably can’t get in, but I won’t be able to get out, either.....”

Ennoshita sat onto the floor at a loss for words. Hinata imagined a mascot knocking furiously on the cubicle door behind Ennoshita while it lies in waiting. He couldn’t help but shudder at the thought.

“Then..... we can’t get out.....”

Probably due to the tiredness accumulated by the day, everyone starting chatting about lame topics like this. Seeing the members regaining their energy, Sawamura clapped once and shouted.

“Alright, let’s return already. Our next opponent is Shinzen..... Listen, we can’t run for the third time in a row this afternoon!”

“Osu!”

The members of Karasuno walked back to the first gymnasium after getting back on their feet. The players from Shinzen were already on the court waiting for them. Their captain said proudly:

“You guys are too slow, I thought you guys ran away from being afraid of running for the third time.”

Faced with the opponents’ provocation, Karasuno of course could not take it lying down. Tanaka leaned forward and shouted.

“What? What’s so scary about running, hey! We’ll run for your guys to see even if we win! Right, Daichi-san!”

Sawamura was after all his senior; Tanaka hence shifted his tone to a more polite one. Sawamura smiled while telling him:

“You’re so full of vigor, however, run by yourself if you want to.”

—

In the end, Karasuno still lost all their matches for the day. Once they were done with the penalties, everyone were already losing strength in their legs. All of them dragged themselves to cleaning up the gymnasium.

“It’s indeed difficult to win.”

Sugawara looked up at the ceiling, his tone, though cheerful, was unable to hide his regret. Kageyama stood beside him and bit his lips.

“..... Sorry.”

“Hmm? Why are you apologizing? To try and improve on something you couldn’t do before and slowly becoming good at it is practice in itself. It’s understandable to not get it on the first try.”

“That’s true.....”

Seeing Kageyama maintaining his silence, Sugawara raised his eyebrows slightly and asked.

“Do you think this is all your fault? Do you think it’s because of you that the quick with Hinata is not working well, or that your tosses were the cause of our defeat today?”

“N-No, that’s not true.....!”

Hearing Sugawara’s stern voice, Kageyama raised his head immediately, but Sugawara maintained his usual cheerful expression.

“I’m just kidding!”

“Ah.....”

“But even so, we have to win tomorrow. Running is really tough.”

“..... Osu!”

Kageyama bowed towards Sugawara and then ran away while pushing the trolley full of volleyballs. Hinata, who was beside him, mopped the floor while shouting.

“Lev! Let’s compete in floor moping!”

Lev was taken aback; he looked at Hinata from head to toe.

“Just where do you get your stamina from?”

“You’re not competing? Then I’ll be the winner!”

“Wait, I didn’t say I wasn’t going to!”

Lev was provoked by Hinata’s words. He decided to accept the challenge.

“Alright, let’s begin!”

“Hey, don’t cheat!”

Seeing the two of them running around while mopping the floor, Tsukishima frowned as he folded the net, his face irritated by the noisy duo. Yamaguchi stood behind him, holding back what he wanted to say.

The night deepens—

—

The next day, the temperature became at its highest in the afternoon; everyone decided to rest in between matches.

Hinata went to the washroom some distance away from the gymnasium. As he walked on the corridor connecting the gymnasiums and the teaching blocks, he saw the members of Shinzen playing with water.

“Woah.....”

They had gotten a water pipe from the drinking fountain and, without their shirts on, splashed the water on each other. The water against the sun rays were slightly glaring to the eyes. Hinata then realised that it was indeed summertime.

“Looks so comfortable!”

Hinata couldn’t help but say. The members of Shinzen, although complaining,

saying things such as “the water is warm!” and “because the water pipe is warm!”, they were still laughing heartily.

“So good!”

Probably because Hinata looked so envious towards them, the captain of Shinzen splashed some water onto Hinata.

“You, from Karasuno, join us too!”

“Ah, can I?”

Hinata was wiping off the water on his face, and once he heard it, he removed his shoes immediately and ran out the corridor. He stepped into a puddle barefooted, then sprayed water onto his head with his t-shirt still on.

“Woah! Really! The water is warm!”

Even though the water was warm, spraying the water onto the sweat-drenched body was still very comfortable. Hinata even felt his fatigue accumulated throughout the day washed off with the flow of the water. He wiped off the water beads on his face and looked up. His eyes met with Lev, who was at the corridor.

Lev carried with him a basket full of sports drinks. Probably because it was too heavy, his back looked even more slouched than on usual days. In Nekoma where there are no female managers, the first year members probably always did jobs such as this.

“Your hair is all clumped together?”

“Shut up! I know!”

Shinzen’s captain blushed while shouting. Hinata then told him: “Although that’s what he said, he had no ill intentions.” Hinata then waved towards Lev.

“Lev, let’s compete!”

“Ah? Compete with what?”

Hinata was already splashing water on him with the water pipe before Lev even completed what he wanted to say.

“What are you doing!” Lev shouted. Once Hinata put the water pipe down, Lev

snatched it from him immediately and placed it beneath Hinata's t-shirt.

"How's this?"

"Yah! Stop it!"

Hinata struggled to escape, but Lev pressed onto him mercilessly. The members of Shinzen were dumbfounded from looking at what was happening in front of them.

"Looks like an adult bullying a child, I can't continue looking further....."

"Because Lev is too tall."

"Hinata is too short."

"I think both."

Just then, probably worried as to why the sports drinks weren't delivered to them yet, or probably because it was too noisy outside, Kenma walked out from the gymnasium to find out what was going on. Then, he saw the drenched Hinata and Lev, his face immediately changing into a helpless expression.

"..... Drowned rats."

"Kenma join us too! It's really comfortable!"

Hinata waved his hand towards Kenma, inviting him to join in. Kenma replied curtly with a "no", his attention then shifted to Lev.

"We're going to be in a match soon, quickly change into a new set of clothes and gather."

"Oh..... Yes!"

Hinata wrung his t-shirt as Lev straightened his back and ran away. Hinata chased after him.

"Sorry! It's all my fault for suggesting a competition.....!"

—

Hinata, Lev and Kenma walked silently on the corridor. They had went back to the room where they put their belongings in to change their clothes.

Because there were no dormitories in Shinzen High School, the classrooms

were used for sleeping during the training camp. Every school was assigned a classroom, while the female managers and the coaches were given separate rooms to sleep in. Also, a classroom was converted to a meeting room for the captains of each team to hold their discussions at night.

Passing by them on the corridor, the managers and coaches were all slightly shocked by the duo. Hinata shrunk his body as he lowered his head in embarrassment, while Lev, unabashed, continued walking forward, his back slouching. He suddenly turned behind and asked Kenma.

“Um, why is Kenma-san coming with us?”

“Because if you run away, Kuroo will scold me.”

“As if I would run away!”

Hearing their conversation, Hinata laughed.

“Nekoma’s captain looked like he’ll smile even when angry!”

“So is Karasuno’s captain.”

Kenma imagined Sawamura’s face while saying.

“Really?”

Hinata responded casually, his mind suddenly thought of Sawamura and Kuroo surrounding him with their half-smiling faces while looking down at him, both of them saying “Hey, Hinata” and “Yo, Shrimpy”. His body shuddered at the thought.

“Ooh..... I’m feeling chilly all over. Let’s change into our clothes quick and starting practicing.....”

Hearing Hinata’s words, Kenma was suddenly at a loss for words.

“You still want to continue practicing huh..... You’re really full of energy, having practiced with Lev the whole day and still having the energy to compete against him.”

“I just don’t want to be dragged down by this fellow!”

Lev pointed towards Hinata, as if he really didn’t want to be categorised in the same category as Hinata. Hinata looked up at Lev, his face in total disbelief as he

said:

“Isn’t it a pity to not practice with and compete against each other during the training camp?”

“I find it a pity to waste your energy.” Kenma mumbled to himself, then continued saying:

“That guy..... is his name Kageyama? Weren’t you competing against him? You guys were still so noisy before.”

“T-That.....” Hinata didn’t know what to say. He pouted.

“That guy now..... Uh, same for me too. I feel we’re not in the position to compete against each other now, hmm.....”

“Did you guys quarrel?”

Lev asked straightforwardly.

“We did, but the problem does not lie here. Uh..... I guess I should say, although I very much want to compete with him, both of us have something we must overcome right now, um, it’s like taking a break, uh.....”

Hinata grabbed onto his hair while standing on the corridor. Kenma looked at him while pushing open the door to the teaching block. Having just returned from outside, the interior of the building looked darker to them, as if a maze where they could not see what was in front. Seeing this, Kenma mumbled:

“Is this for level advancement.....?”

Hinata caught up with him and asked: “What does that mean?” Kenma explained:

“In RPG games, in order to advance in level, the player must accumulated experience points—something like that.....”

“Level?”

Hinata looked at the ceiling, as if ‘looking’ for his next ‘level’. Suddenly, he turned to look at Kenma.

“Ah, I get it! Right now we’re squatting.”

“What? Squatting.....?”

Hearing something unexpected, Kenma knitted his eyebrows. Lev asked “is this a dialect?”, Hinata immediately took three steps forward, then lowered his body before kicking hard onto the floor. His petite body disappeared in front of Kenma and Lev’s eyes—no, we should say that his speed was so fast the two of them didn’t realise until a moment later that he “had jumped up”.

“Huh?”

“What.....”

Hinata landed on the floor lightly. He turned around and said to the stunned two:

“See, don’t you have to squat before jumping really high up? It’s impossible with our level right now.”

Amidst the darkness, Hinata’s expression emitted a strong sense of willpower. Kenma nodded, although unsure whether he understood what Hinata said, his feelings complicated. Lev said without thinking:

“Hinata looked even smaller when he squatted!”

“What..... shut up, seriously! Don’t be too shocked once I master my killer move!”

“Then I’ll jump higher when you perform your killer move.”

Then, Lev jumped high up, his palm touching the ceiling on the corridor. Hinata retaliated, unwilling to admit defeat.

“What..... I can do it too!”

Kenma sighed once again seeing the duo jumping on the corridor while bickering noisily.

“These two kids.....”

—

Once they were done changing clothes, the three of them returned to the gymnasium. It was Nekoma against Shinzen, and Karasuno against Ubugawa.

“To the court!”

Hearing Hinata’s voice, Kenma glanced at the court beside. He saw Hinata

slapping himself on his cheeks while preparing for the match enthusiastically.

Kenma fastened his shoelaces and stood in front of the net. Just then, Lev called upon Kenma.

“I have decided.”

“..... Yeah.”

With the blow of the whistle, the matches began.

Two balls flew up at the same time in the first gymnasium. the voices of 24 people, the cheers from the reserve players and club managers, as well as the commands from the coaches filled the gymnasium slowly.

“Bring it!”

Hinata shouted loudly. Kenma couldn't help but look towards the court beside him once again.

But the toss by Kageyama flew above Hinata's head.

“Woah!”

“Damn it.....”

The duo's quicks were still not taking shape, the atmosphere unnatural, as if they were outsiders trying to coordinate with each other. This was vastly different from the “freak quick” the duo had been doing before. When performing the “freak quick”, Kageyama, with his pinpoint accuracy, allowed no slight mistake in his toss, and Hinata could hence jump in for the attack with 100% trust in Kageyama.

However, Hinata had said clearly that he's still in the “squatting position” right now, his words displaying no sense of insecurity. Even till now, his trust in his partner remain unchanged.

“Before the jump.....”

Lev noticed Kenma mumbling to himself, he then glanced towards the side as well.

“Those guys, probably they've been ‘squatting’ the whole time.”

“Yeah.....”

Kuroo smiled while walking towards Kenma and Lev.

“Hey, you guys still have the time to look at others? Hey.”

His eyes were devoid of the slightest smile.

“S-Sorry.....”

“Sorry!”

Kenma turned his head away while Lev bowed in apology.

The heat in the court became warmer, while coach Nekomata from Nekoma, who was standing outside the court, grinned from ear to ear.

“Once the summer break ends, the Spring High preliminaries will commence. ‘Cat vs. Crow, the battle of the trash heaps’ I really do look forward to it.....

-end-

The best buddy's feelings

(All credits to the original source. Please do not claim and reproduce it as your own!)

This happened on the second night of the summer training camp at Shinzen High School. Yamaguchi's scream echoed throughout the corridor lit up by fluorescent lights, with insects flying around.

"Tsukkkiiiiiiiiiii!"

Tsukishima was surprised by the sudden loud scream coming from behind him, but he still managed to maintain his composure as he turned around.

His shoelaces were already loosened, his hands carrying his sports towel and bedroom slippers. Tsukishima had just rejected Fukurodani's Bokuto for a practice session with him and was headed to take a bath before going to sleep.

Today was the same as usual, with practice spanning throughout the whole day. He was caught by Bokuto and the others yesterday, and trained spiking together with them. But there wasn't a need to do self-practice every day, and hence rejecting them was only natural. That was all Tsukishima thought; he had no other intentions.

To be frank, Tsukishima thought that too many people had mistaken hard work and perseverance to be a virtue. He was not suited to do things in this manner.

Yamaguchi had known him since elementary school, and being friends for such a long time, Yamaguchi ought to know Tsukishima very well, yet ignoring his thoughts, Yamaguchi ran and shouted while running towards him. *So irritating*, Tsukishima didn't like the unnecessary emotions that came with Yamaguchi's voice and footsteps; such things would only irritate him.

But even so, ignoring Yamaguchi's presence would be troublesome too. "*Why are you angry?*" "*Did you just ignore me just now?*" Although none of their business, the people surrounding him will still start to pick on his attitude. Tsukishima didn't want to waste his time on useless matters.

Therefore, he turned around.

Yamaguchi caught up to him, unsure what he was going to say. He spoke nonsensically while catching his breath.

“Tsukki, from then till now, no matter what you do, you’d do it speedily and appropriately, and I have always been admiring that.”

Really?

He was telling Tsukishima what he thinks, suppressing his emotions. Despite just ending practice, Yamaguchi still ran to him in full strength. His breathless face looked really bad. Tsukishima couldn’t stand it any longer—it didn’t fit with his aesthetic views.

Tsukishima responded curtly.

“So?”

“.....!”

See, you’re all silent. If you’re going to remain silent, might as well not do useless things like this in the first place. You’ll only lose more if you want to gain more, even if there is nothing to gain from doing nothing, there’s at least no risk in doing so. If you try to climb up, you’ll only fall and hurt yourself—

The silent Yamaguchi did not leave, the crease in between the eyebrows showing his reluctance to give up, unsure what else he wanted to say. Tsukishima, on the other hand, wanted very much to rest early and hoped Yamaguchi would stop pestering him.

But Yamaguchi bit his lips, and then shouted:

“Tsukki, you’re very lame these days!”

—

On the first night of the training camp, the members of Karasuno all laid in the gymnasium in Shinzen High School, devoid of energy. They had played with the schools of Fukurodani Academy Group and lost all of their matches. Compared to the hot weather in the day, the night breeze was really comfortable, and everyone was so tired that if they stayed there any longer they’d just fall asleep. However, they still had *that* bit of energy left.

Sawamura and Sugawara went back to the gymnasium in order to further

analyse synchronised attacks. Azumane on the other hand decided to practice his serves.

Hearing Azumane say “I’m going to practice serves, I don’t think I practiced enough”, Yamaguchi, deciding he should do the same, wiped off his sweat and stood up.

Since May, before the Inter High preliminaries, Yamaguchi had been practicing his jump float serves with the club’s alumni Shimada, but his serves were still far from good. In the match against Seijou, Yamaguchi finally had the chance to go on court as the pinch server, yet he failed his very attempt. His frustration and regret from then had become his motivation now.

He didn’t want to experience the same regret and embarrassment again. There will never be a second time.

Yamaguchi swatted away the tiny flies around him, and after hitting the mosquito that was going to bite his legs, he ran behind Azumane and went back to the first gymnasium. Just then, he saw Tsukishima, who was about to leave. Yamaguchi called to him.

“I’m going to practice serves, Tsukki.....”

“I’m going to take a bath and sleep.”

Tsukishima rejected Yamaguchi just like that. Yamaguchi had wanted to say more, but Tsukishima had already left the gymnasium, hence he regained his concentration and stood beside Azumane on the side of the line.

“Is it okay here?”

“Yeah, it’s okay.”

Azumane replied while taking a glance at Yamaguchi.

Yamaguchi heaved a sigh, then bounced the ball on the floor.

A float jump serve is a method where the ball is hit at a height without adding spin to the ball. It can also be described as a “breaking ball”* that drops, and compared to the normal serves, although a jump floater looked weaker, because there was no way of telling where the ball would drop, and with its lack of power, the opponents would have a harder time trying to receive it. A jump

floater would be a great weapon if one mastered it..... at least that was how it was supposed to be,

***breaking ball: a term used in baseball to describe a pitch that does not travel straight to the batter, instead wobbling in its direction—similar to a jump floater in volleyball.**

Yamaguchi had yet to master the technique, his current successes only due to luck and chance. But compared to how he couldn't do it at all before, this was already quite an improvement.

“It's like pushing the ball off with your palm.....”

Just as Yamaguchi was raising the ball up with his hand, he suddenly felt a pressure in the air beside his ears.

“Eh?”

Yamaguchi looked to his side and saw Azumane. Just then, the floor vibrated, Yamaguchi looked to the other side of the court—turns out that Azumane had succeeded in his jump serve, and because the rebound action was too strong, the ball hit onto the wall.

Azumane heaved a sigh softly, his face full of vigor.

Yamaguchi realised that the vibration was because of the strength of the serve, which had cut through the air in high speed. He couldn't help but gasp at the strength and concentration Azumane had.

“Awesome.....”

It was understandable for one to be taken aback and lose his confidence from seeing his senpai, what more the team's ace. Yamaguchi returned to his senses and raised the ball again.

“Push it out from the highest point.....”

Yamaguchi jumped and hit the ball, but the ball fell in front of the net.

“Should I increase my strength..... let me try again.”

Yamaguchi practiced a few more times, but he couldn't hit a serve that he was satisfied with. Sometimes the ball would spin slightly and become a very weak

serve, or the ball would fall to the ground before going beyond the net, or even worse, failing to hit the ball because he couldn't get the timing right. Azumane, on the contrary, continued with his success in doing his jump serves, the strength that came with the serves vibrating across the floor.

Yamaguchi took a glance at Azumane.

He knew Azumane's serve was different from his. He understood this very well, but the presence of Azumane made him feel that his skills were inferior to that of Azumane's..... *No matter how hard I try, I probably cannot match up to the regulars.....* Yamaguchi couldn't help but think this way.

Yamaguchi recalled the training camp in July, where during the practice match with Nekoma, Hinata stole Azumane's ball..... *Hinata is also a first year member like me, but his physique allows him to be on par with the ace, if I were him, can I do the same.....?*

"One more time, I must succeed this time....."

Just as Yamaguchi picked up the ball again, slightly afraid, Sugawara, along with Sawamura, Tanaka and others, who had borrowed the tablet pc from the coach earlier to analyse the synchronised attack, ran towards him from the corner of the gymnasium.

"Hey, Yamaguchi, so sorry we can't give you any suggestions."

"Ah? No, please don't put it this way....."

Sugawara senpai was probably worried because I haven't succeeded in a single serve yet. Yamaguchi lowered his head, but Sugawara did not say anything further to comfort him, instead slightly shaking his head.

"Although I'm your senpai, I'm so sorry I couldn't do anything to help you. You even had to go to Shimada senpai yourself, looks like we have been too dependent on your will to learn."

"Ah? No such thing! It's nothing at all! I'm doing all of these of my own accord!"

Yamaguchi tried to explain himself, Sugawara smiled bitterly.

"Thank you for saying this. Ah, let me try it too. Uh, is this how a non-spinning

serve goes?”

Sugawara then picked up a ball, and, under Yamaguchi’s dazed stare, he jumped on the spot and hit the ball out.

Seeing his elegant movement, it would’ve been no surprise if he succeeded in his first try. But Sugawara exclaimed instead.

“Ah, I failed!”

The ball fell onto the floor before even passing by the net. It then rolled back to their side.....

“.....It’s indeed possible for me! I was still thinking that there’s a slight chance it will succeed. Looks like I’m too naïve, seriously.”

Unsure how truthful Sugawara were with his words, he smiled as he said, then said to Yamaguchi, who was looking at everyone, troubled.

“Yamaguchi, you’re really great. If we can use this during matches, it’ll be very dependable.”

“Ah? Ah, no, uh, I’m still far from it. Shimada senpai is the one that’s great.....”

Although Yamaguchi was slightly flustered, he felt himself slowly regaining his confidence. Sugawara waved towards him and said: “Good luck!” before returning to Sawamura and the others.

“Dependable..... really? Alright, one more time!”

Yamaguchi raised the ball once again.

—

On the second day of the training camp, the weather was well over 30 degrees Celsius, but it wasn’t as hot.

On this day, the members of Karasuno had just completed their first penalty of the day. The club managers were waiting for them in the gymnasium, their hands full of sports drinks and towels.

“Everyone drink up! Also, please use the towels!”

Yachi, the new club manager, busied herself among the members, who were too tired to get up from the floor, their bodies covered with sweat. Sometimes,

she'd accidentally kick the ball away, or get scared by the rhinoceros beetles when they flew near her. Everyone was slightly worried for her, but Yachi continued enthusiastically with her first job since joining the club. If there were only Shimizu, it would have been very tough.

Yachi gave Yamaguchi a towel.

“Yamaguchi-kun, this towel is for you!”

“Ah, thank you.....”

Yamaguchi had still not gotten used to Yachi, a student from the next class, becoming the club's manager. He took the towel nervously, while Yachi, not knowing what Yamaguchi's inner thoughts were, wiped off the sweat from her forehead as she looked up at the burning sun.

“So awesome of you guys to still have the energy to persevere on under such hot weather! I would've melted if I were you guys.....”

“No, we only ran because we lost, we're not that great.....”

Yamaguchi was slightly troubled, his expression shy. Yachi looked at him inquisitively, her eyes wide open.

“Ah, w-what?”

Yachi continued staring at the flustered Yamaguchi, then spoke admiringly:

“You're taller than I thought!”

“Eh?”

“Ah, I only realised how tall you are after standing beside you, what a shock! You're about the same height as Kageyama-kun, right?”

Then, Yachi tip-toed, probably to measure the height difference between Yamaguchi and herself, but considered a petite person even among girls, Yachi was probably less than 150cm. Seeing Yachi look at himself at such close distance, Yamaguchi's heartbeat quickened. He turned to a side and said:

“Ah ah..... Hmm, I'm 179cm, probably about the same as Kageyama.....”

“Really!”

Seeing Yachi's surprised expression, Yamaguchi felt embarrassed all of a

sudden and mumbled:

“Probably because I’m weak, so I look shorter.....”

“Ah! I don’t mean that.....! So sorry!”

Yachi suddenly apologised to him in a most respectful manner, flustering Yamaguchi once again.

“No, sorry! I didn’t mean it that way, you don’t have to apologise, I’m in the wrong too.”

“Yamaguchi-kun is not in the wrong! Ahhhhhhhhhh! I-I’m a worthless worm!”

“What are you saying! W-Wait a minute, don’t be like this! Yachi-san, you don’t have to kneel!”

“A worm-like person like me is most suited to stay on the ground! Just let me hide myself!”

“Wait, Yachi-san! What are you saying? I already said sorry!”

Under the tree’s shade, the third year students drank their sports drinks while looking at the two of them apologising to each other continuously.

“Eh, Suga, is it alright to leave them be? I think she’s digging into the ground.....?”

“Looks fun, I suppose there’s nothing to worry about. Although Yac-chan was slightly afraid at first, she looked more comfortable around us now.”

“She’s covered in dirt, is this what you mean by becoming comfortable.....?”

Sugawara smiled while looking at the two of them, while Sawamura was troubled. Azumane, who was standing beside Sugawara and Sawamura, suddenly pressed on his stomach and shouted “so painful!”, his face all crumpled up.

“Hmm? Asahi, what’s wrong?”

“Seeing them apologising like this made me want to apologise too.....”

Sugawara’s smile disappeared instantaneously.

“No, Asahi, that’s just too weird.”

Although Tsukishima, who had returned slightly later than the others from the run, saw Yamaguchi and Yachi apologising to each other profusely, he thought of how troublesome it would be to ask them what was going on—it wasn't something important, anyway.

Tsukishima arched his back in pain, his shoulders moving up and down while he catches his breath. He then saw someone pass a bottle of sports drink to him—it was Shimizu.

“Here, for you, don't gulp them all at once.”

“Yes.....”

Tsukishima lowered his face and stretched out his hand to take the sports drink. The cooling drink washed down his burning throat, and although Shimizu senpai told him not to drink all at once, it seemed impossible.

“Hoo.....”

Tsukishima raised his head after finishing all his drink, and just then he heard a happy voice.

“Hey! Megane-kun!”

He turned around and saw the captains from Fukurodani and Nekoma. After rejecting Yamaguchi's invitation to practice by themselves yesterday, Tsukishima was caught by these two on his way back to the dormitory and subsequently duped into practicing spikes with them. Although Fukurodani's captain Bokuto looked like a straight-up volleyball maniac, Nekoma's captain Kuroo was not as simple a guy. Kuroo smiled slyly.

“It's been tough on you, do you want to practice blocking today?”

“.....”

Tsukishima had wanted to reply, but he couldn't utter a single word. A bead of sweat fell into his eyes from his forehead, and just as he was covering his face with his towel, Bokuto said “we'll wait for you”, then patted his back and walked away.

“So painful.....”

Tsukishima frowned as he saw the two of them walking away. Fukurodani's manager peeked her head into the gymnasium from the entrance door and shouted at Bokuto.

“Ah! Found you! Bokuto, hurry! The match is beginning soon!”

Seeing Bokuto, who was caught by the manager, and Kuroo, his face smirking, Tsukishima felt slightly irritated.

—

The parents of Shinzen High School's students have provided watermelons for the participants of the training camp. All members from the five schools have gathered outside the gymnasium, each grabbing a slice of watermelon from the club managers. The high school boys have suddenly gone into summer break mode; some even started screaming.

Yamaguchi sat at the entrance of the gymnasium and finished his slice of watermelon. The cooling sensation and sweetness of the watermelon diffused into his body, as if reviving him. Yamaguchi looked behind the gymnasium and saw some eating their watermelons hastily, while others were competing against each other in spitting watermelon seeds. Yamaguchi couldn't help but smile.

Then, he started looking for Tsukishima, who was just eating his watermelon beside him a while earlier, but now he was gone.

“Pffff.....”

Yamaguchi suddenly felt his mood for summer break disappear, instead becoming anxious. The people who were now fooling around were people who were stronger than him.

Thinking about this, Yamaguchi became restless. He wanted to find someone to talk to, and beside him were the year two and three regular members who had gathered together, but he felt that it was impossible to break into their inner circle.

Just as he was thinking, Yamaguchi suddenly saw Hinata busy running around. Hinata was happily chatting with the members from the other schools while eating his watermelon non-stop. It was hard to imagine how a small-built person like him could eat that much watermelon? Also, him being surrounded by tall

people like Lev and Inuoka from Nekoma felt almost like a captured alien. Yamaguchi thought to himself.

That guy is short and silly, yet so cool in matches.

If he could become someone like Hinata, fighting on par with the opponents.....

Then, Yamaguchi remembered that he was the only first year student to not make it to the regular line-up. He bit his lips and left.

He wants to finish his lunch quick and continue with his practice.

—

Yamaguchi came to the empty canteen, eating katsudon on his own. Then, he remembered something he heard while watching Ubugawa High School's practice match.

Serve and block.

“Destroy the opponent's formation with the serve, then try to limit the opponent's attacks before scoring with a block! This is the next best attack after the serve.” Coach Ukai explained.

Indeed, Ubugawa, whose serve is their core of attack, scored in this manner very often.

“Destroy the formation with the serve, then block to score.....”

After finishing the watermelon, the members who have arrived at the canteen increased. Amidst the noisy canteen, Yamaguchi repeated the coach's words in his mind as he thought to himself.

“I will destroy the opponent's formation with my serves.....”

Then, Yamaguchi looked around him. *A person like me who couldn't even become a regular is actually dreaming of becoming the core person in attacking? Can I really imagine having such superpowers.....*

Yamaguchi couldn't help but think this way, but he rejected that thinking immediately.

Hinata started out as a beginner too, but he also announced that he wanted

to become “Karasuno’s ace”, I can do this too.....!

But things are always different in reality.

I’m the only one who hasn’t done anything yet.

I’m the only first year member to not make it to the regular line-up, the same during the Inter High; I had such a rare opportunity, yet I screwed up at such critical moment. I should have tried to turn the table during the match, instead I.....

I don’t want to regret anymore, definitely.

Yamaguchi thought.

If I were not serious, I probably wouldn’t feel any regret. If I were not hardworking, I wouldn’t need to endure all the tough training, running to and fro on such hot weather. The most I have to do for a club is just to achieve a passing grade, it has always been like this.

Thinking to this point, Yamaguchi shook his head.

He doesn’t want to look back anymore.

He already knew the pain of regret, hence he could fully comprehend how he must win the next time.

Right now, some people are practicing hard in order to become stronger.

He couldn’t lie to himself anymore.

Finishing his food, Yamaguchi looked at his hands placed on the table. Have the practice these days made his hands stronger, or was it just his imagination?

He wasn’t just imagining his improvements from all the practices he had till today.

I cannot jump as high as Hinata, I’m not as talented as Azumane too, and I’m definitely not as tall as Tsukki.

But I want to play volleyball too.

I must win next time, I don’t want to be the dead weight of the team, I want to be an official attacking force.

An average person like me can only continue to practice hard.....!

Yamaguchi picked up the teacup on the table. Without realising that the tea had already turned cold, he gulped down the tea. He then stood up, returned the utensils and was heading back towards the first gymnasium.

Just as Yamaguchi about to rush out the cafeteria, he bumped into Sawamura, with Sugawara and Azumane were behind him.

“Oh, what happened, Yamaguchi? Are you heading towards the washroom?”

Yamaguchi looked at the captain. Considering solely their height, Yamaguchi was clearly taller than the captain, but the captain had a bigger presence, was more powerful and more dependable than Yamaguchi. He took a glimpse at the captain’s arm and realised that it was much stronger than his.

This guy had trained everyday for two more years longer than me.

Seeing Yamaguchi staring at himself, Sawamura asked inquisitively.

“Hmm? What’s up?”

“Ah, nothing, sorry!”

“Eh? Uh uh , it’s okay.”

Yamaguchi bowed deeply, then ran towards the corridor.

Sawamura felt slightly taken baffled as he looked on at Yamaguchi’s diminishing back view. He then asked Sugawara.

“Eh, Suga, the first years are indeed really scared of me.”

“Hmm, it’s common for captains.”

“Really.....”

Sawamura sank his shoulders in despair, then picked up the tray and looked at the menu on the wall. Azumane, who was standing beside him, mumbled:

“I want to eat tonkotsu ramen so bad.”

“What are you saying, Asahi, shoyu ramen is obviously the better choice.”

Sawamura retaliated seriously, while Sugawara smiled and said:

“Daichi, I don’t think it’s only the first years that are scared of you, I think even

Asashi is scared of you.”

—

During the afternoon break, Yamaguchi walked into the empty gymnasium and picked up a ball. He had been playing volleyball since elementary school, initially choosing it randomly because he “wanted to become stronger through sports”, but now.....

Yamaguchi stood by the line and bounced the ball slowly. The floor vibrated under his feet, the sound of the ball bouncing vibrated across the empty gymnasium. He bounced it a few more times to gather his concentration before looking towards the other side of the court. Yamaguchi imagined the route of the ball in his mind, calculating where he should aim the ball at.

“..... Alright.”

He raised the ball with his hands up high, his eyes on the ball as he took two steps to the front.

Then, Yamaguchi jumped up.

His right palm hit the ball.

“.....!”

Yamaguchi watched as the ball flew out in a soft motion.

But the ball fell to the ground before going past the net.

“Ah.....”

With a thud, the ball dropped to the ground before rolling back to Yamaguchi. He mumbled to himself as he picked up the ball.

“..... Hmm, it’s not that simple, huh.”

But he didn’t lower his head, instead looking to the front.

“Serve and block, huh. The serve must take place first. The block can only happen after I master the serve.....”

Yamaguchi raised the ball high again, then hit it out.

Although the ball went past the net this time, it didn’t go in the direction he

had planned.

“Alright, one more!”

Yamaguchi picked up another ball enthusiastically, but he suddenly lowered his head, his face pale.

“Ooh..... probably because I ate too fast, I think I should take a rest first.....”

—

That night—

Karasuno lost all the practice matches again. After the practice match, Bokuto from Fukurodani called upon Tsukishima.

“Hey! Megane-kun! Want to practice spiking with me again today?”

Tsukishima nodded slightly and said: “Sorry, I’m not going.” He then walked past Bokuto. Bokuto didn’t persist any further, instead calling upon Kuroo.

“Kuroo—”

Hinata took notice of the seemingly casual conversation. He caught up to Tsukishima, who had left the gymnasium, pestering him.

“Why? You know Fukurodani’s ace? Why did you reject him? Such a waste!”

“You’re so annoying. I’m not like you, who has endless stamina.....”

Tsukishima, irritated, left immediately after saying. Hinata shouted.

“What!”

Hinata was not frustrated due to being ignored.

“What is with Tsukishima..... Fukurodani’s ace had asked him to practice together, and yet he rejected the offer! Unbelievable!”

Hinata was furious over Tsukishima’s rejection towards Bokuto’s offer. He continued whining about what was on his mind while Yamaguchi, noticing Hinata walking towards him, turned around.

“Eh? Fukurodani’s ace? Awesome!”

“Right! Such a waste!”

Seeing Hinata, who was flaring his nostrils furiously, Yamaguchi suddenly thought of something, because he had heard of the word “waste” earlier.

“Tsukishima he..... should be more..... I think if he put in more effort, he would’ve improved so much more! Such a waste, especially with his height of 188cm!”

Tanaka had said those words after the penalty run from earlier.

They were indeed right about what they said.

Rejecting the ace’s rare offer, not putting his height to good use, letting go of the great opportunity in front of him—all these are indeed “such a waste”.

But if putting it this way, Tsukishima must’ve felt it to be “such a waste” as well, spending his three years in high school on club activities.

Tsukishima’s older brother was dealt with a huge blow when he was unable to become a regular member of the team because his kouhai, the “little giant”, had such overwhelming talent. Seeing his older brother like this, Tsukishima realised that hard work has no meaning, because it will never surpass talent. So why waste precious time on working hard?

Yamaguchi was anxious. He knew the state Tsukishima was in, yet he didn’t know what to do.....

I should be able to do something; I should be able to say something.

Yamaguchi looked at Hinata, who, in the past had encouraged a lot of people with his innocent and quick-witted words.

Yamaguchi asked.

“..... If you were me, what would you say to Tsukki right now?”

“I won’t say anything.”

Yamaguchi was slightly taken aback by Hinata’s straightforwardness. Hinata continued:

“Because I’m not sure if Tsukishima still wants to continue playing volleyball. There’s no point in trying to talk sense into someone who doesn’t want to try!”

Hearing this, Yamaguchi mumbled:

“..... I don’t think he hates volleyball. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have come to Karasuno.”

“What about you, Yamaguchi?”

Yamaguchi looked up upon hearing his name, and saw Hinata staring at him.

“What would you tell Tsukishima then?”

..... *What would I say?*

—

In the washroom from a distance away, Yamaguchi, determined, ran onto the corridor. Running like this after the penalty runs during the day, Yamaguchi’s legs nearly cramped up. His chest hurt too, not mentioning the disgusting insects flying into his face. But he didn’t care about them.

“Tsukiiiiiiiiiiii!”

Yamaguchi thought to himself while thinking.

You must’ve found this irritating. With me running behind you while screaming like this, you must’ve been annoyed and irritated by me, sorry.

Although that was what he thought, Yamaguchi continued running forward. Then, he caught up with Tsukishima, who was holding his sports towel and bedroom slippers in his hands. Yamaguchi said while catching his breath:

“Tsukki, from then till now, no matter what you do, you’d do it speedily and appropriately, and I have always been admiring that.”

No, I wasn’t going to say these. And even if I do, he would listen to none of them. Yamaguchi thought while feeling anxious.

“So?”

I expected this, his cold, expressionless voice. It wouldn’t do much to say these, I know, there’s no weight to what I say, because I had come to talk to you about your problems.

Hinata said earlier.

““What would you tell Tsukishima then?”

What would I tell Tsukishima? Both Hinata and the captain could not put it into words, but what about me? What can I, as someone who has known him since elementary school, tell him?

Tsukishima is staring at me, his face clearly saying I'm annoying and irritating. He's doing all these to chase me away, in order to run away from me, run away from Hinata, run away from volleyball, and run away from himself.

Yamaguchi suddenly recalled the day he first met Tsukishima, who was carrying his school bag. He was full of confidence while looking down at the bullies who bullied Yamaguchi. He looked really cool back then. Yamaguchi had always wanted to become someone like him.

Thinking of this, Yamaguchi shook off his thoughts and stared into Tsukishima's eyes while saying:

"Tsukki, you're very lame these days!"

His unexpected loud voice drowned away all of his hesitation. He didn't care any longer what Tsukishima's expression was, and, as if a running tap and despite feeling the pain, he poured out everything that was on his mind.

-end-

[Translation] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER (1)

[Original JP raw transcribed [here](#) by [fedoraowl](#)]

HAIKYU FIGHTER ROUND.1

“Let’s go to find someone stronger than me!”

Among the crowded night in the downtown, there was one alleyway where almost nobody seemed to pass through. From between the buildings, in the dirty back alley, a voice unlike the darkness of the city was heard –

“Rolling thunder!” A short boy rolled on the ground and attacked, sending his long-haired, bearded opponent flying.

“Iright, my victory!” The boy who was rejoicing in his victory is called Shouyou. In his jet-black martial art uniform, he was a chivalrous martial artist in training.

“Don’t get it wrong. It isn’t you who are strong; the other guy is weak.” With his cold words and wearing a white martial art uniform was Tobio. Just like Shouyou, he was also undergoing training as a martial artist.

This back alley was a kind of a battle ring for fighters who love to brawl. Not only martial artists, the city’s wicked as well as fighters that had been excommunicated continued to fight night after night.

“It’s boring now that I’ve beaten most of the guys from this area.”

A shadow suddenly appeared before the two guys who were walking home after the fight.

“Uh, umm, stop!”

A petite girl clad in [Chinese dress](#) appeared. She was holding a handgun in her shaking hands.

Hinata rushed to hide behind Tobio who was ready for battle. He shouted, “Shouldn’t you be doing Kenpō if you’re wearing a Chinese dress!? Why are you using a gun, that’s unfair!”

“It’s because I’m an Interpol investigator, I have no choice... Um, if you agree to be my comrade and fight the criminal syndicate, Karasunou*, I won’t shoot!”

Upon hearing the dangerous girl’s words, Shouyou leaned forward. “Eh? What’s Karasunou? Are they strong?”

“Of course they are! The leader of Karasunou uses a psychic attack where his eyes go *flaaash!*... It’s scary...” she replied with a terrified expression that wasn’t typical of an investigator.

On guard, Tobio’s eyes lit up. “They’re really strong, you said?” And he looked at Hinata, next to him and his eyes lighting up just like his own.

“... Let’s go. We’ll only get weaker fighting the small fry opponents here. If she does anything weird we can just beat her up.”

“Yooosh, that’s settled! Let’s go and find strong guys!” Shouyou said and hopped. Tobio looked sullen. Both of them ran through the night streets as if in a competition. The Chinese dress girl Hitoka put away her gun and went after them.

“Wa-wait up! Do you guys know where the place is at!?”

—

Notes:

- *The novel says “Karasunou” rather than “Karasuno”, *i.e.* with a long “oh” ending... So Karasunou, or alternatively Karasunoo or Karasunoh, up to you.
- Hitoka/Yachi speaks in a special accent, adding *-aru* at the end of her sentences. I decided to ignore those in the translation ~~because I don’t know how to incorporate that without sounding really weird...~~ I guess just note that she speaks that way in your mind when reading this haha

[\[Next chapter | Ch 3\]](#)

[Translation] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 / HAIKYUU FIGHTER (2)

[Original JP raw transcribed [here](#) by [fedoraowl](#)]

[prev. chapter [here](#)]

HAIKYU FIGHTER ROUND.4

“What’s your rank?”

A silhouette of a lion floated in the dark. The daredevil of a man who intended to embark into the den of criminal group Karasunou, a name that was widely known in the underground community.

“If I defeat them, then I’ll be the first/strongest!” he yelled, smiling fearlessly. He was heading into the den and his eyes gleamed with the moonlight. His pupils were greenish in colour. The man’s name was Lev. He was a wild child coming from Russia. He aimed to be the #1 strongest being alive on the earth, and as a start, he came here to annihilate the criminal syndicate Karasunou.

—

The alert/alarm in Karasunou control room rang, and the leader Sawamura himself peered at the monitor. He confirmed Lev’s appearance in the monitor, prowling around, and then commanded while still glaring at the screen.

“... It seems that we’ve been found out. Clean up that trash outside.”

“Sir, yes sir!” saluted Shimizu, a bodyguard in military uniform who was standing in the corner of the control room. She seemed like a knowledgeable woman with her glasses, but behind that appearance she was a fighting machine who would carry out Karasunou’s cold duties faithfully.

At the sound of Shimizu’s boots padding nearer, Lev licked his lips as if seeing his prey. “You’ve finally come out, what’s your rank by strength?”

However, upon seeing Lev’s lion mane, bone accessories and face painting, Shimizu frowned. “..... Weirdo.”

“Wh-what did you say!?” Lev immediately raged up at Shimizu’s cold word.
“They’re cool! It’s the lion that I defeated! It was really strong!”

But Shimizu only glanced at Lev, snorted, and returned into the den.

Lev was bewildered. Was he not even worthy enough to stand as an opponent?

“W-wait a minute! Fight me!!”

Shimizu walked on ahead and ignored Lev as if she hadn’t heard him.

At Shimizu’s ruthless attitude, Lev, disappointed, lost the will to fight and fell onto his knees. After a while, he weakly stood back up and feebly turned his back on the den.

“I’ll become stronger and then come back...”

Sawamura saw the whole thing on the monitor in the control room. He whispered somewhat pitifully, “I’d likely be discouraged too, if I was completely ignored by Shimizu like that...”

To be continued...

[[Next chapter](#)]

[Translation] HAIKYUU!! NOVEL VOL. 3 /

HAIKYUU FIGHTER (3)

[Original JP raw transcribed [here](#) by [fedoraowl](#)]

[[Ch 1](#) | [Ch 2](#)]

HAIKYU FIGHTER ROUND.12

“Circus Night”

“There’s a really pretty girl in that Karasunou gang, isn’t there? I’ll open her eyes to my ‘Fukurou Style’ school of martial arts! Just you wait!”

“Are you saying that your style is better than my Army Preparation Fist, you punk!”

“Whaaat? Mine’s included in the nation’s top 5 best!”

The martial artist in a school uniform Koutarou, and the eyepatched ex-militaryman Ryuunosuke were walking in the wilderness as they bantered with each other. Their aim was, as expected, to find Karasunou’s den.

“I’m going to defeat Karasunou and spread the strength of Fukurou Style around the world! Don’t stand in my way!”

“Should I crush that Whatever Style right now?”

These two kept bickering along their long way and finally, a building that resembled the place they were seeking came before their eyes.

Koutarou took out a pair of binoculars, peeked through it and said, “... Seems like someone beat us to it?”

The one-eyed Ryuunosuke snatched away the binoculars and also looked through them.

“..... Hm?”

He leaned forward. Through the lens, he saw a beautiful woman holding a whip, standing face to face with a head of a lion.

“That’s a ... super pretty trainer!?” he yelled, and ran ahead while still looking through the binoculars. Koutarou chased after him.

“Is that what you saw? Oi, let me see the pretty woman, too!”

The two rushed to the den with fluttering hearts, dazed by the woman. Not long after, they crossed paths with Lev, ignored by the woman and now was tottering away from the den.

“Hm? Are you the lionman who was getting trained just now?” Ryuunosuke asked.

Lev yelled, “I’m strong! I’m different from the lions in the circus! But even so, that woman...”

“What did the woman do?” Ryuunosuke asked with immense interest.

Lev whispered dejectedly, “That woman ignored me...”

“What! You got ignored by that pretty woman...!?” Ryuunosuke’s eyes gleamed.

“I feel that it’s gonna be a paradise! Let’s go!” Ryuunosuke leaped ahead happily.

Behind him, Koutarou offered his hand, “Come here, lionman, give me your hand,” and got bitten by Lev.

To be Continued...

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